United Nations E/ICEF/2008/5/Rev.1

# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
20 May 2008

Original: English

**For action**

**United Nations Children's Fund**
Executive Board
**Annual session 2008**
3-5 June 2008

## UNICEF Child Protection Strategy

*Summary*

The Child Protection Strategy defines the contribution of UNICEF to national and international efforts to fulfil children's rights to protection and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, within the context of the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) for 2006-2009. The strategy has been developed through intensive consultation with a wide range of key partners and UNICEF staff.

It is recommended that the Executive Board adopt the draft decision in section VII.

## I. The strategic aim of child protection

1. Child protection is an issue in every country and a high priority for UNICEF. Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international treaties, all children have the right to be protected from harm. UNICEF activities are guided by the existing international normative framework for the rights of the child, as well as decisions and policies agreed in United Nations intergovernmental bodies. This strategy will be implemented in close cooperation with host Governments.

2. Preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse is essential to ensuring children's rights to survival, development and well-being. The vision and approach of UNICEF is to create a protective environment, where girls and boys are free from violence, exploitation, and unnecessary separation from family; and where laws, services, behaviours and practices minimize children's vulnerability, address known risk factors, and strengthen children's own resilience. This approach is human rights-based, and emphasizes prevention as well as the accountability of governments. It enhances aid effectiveness by supporting sustained national

08-34856 (E) 290508

capacity for child protection. Finally, it reflects children's own roles and resilience as agents of change and actors in strengthening the protective environment.

3. Successful child protection begins with prevention. The priority given to education, health and addressing gender discrimination in the Millennium Development Goals and in UNICEF work underpins this preventive strategy, including in emergencies. Child-sensitive approaches to social protection can make a major contribution: the renewed emphasis of UNICEF on policy advocacy, in tandem with its work in child protection, aims to intensify attention paid to children within national social protection systems and among international development actors. National legal frameworks that put an end to impunity and give children access to justice are also essential.

4. Strong child protection provides a bulwark against the web of risks and vulnerabilities underlying many forms of harm and abuse: sexual abuse and exploitation; trafficking; hazardous labour; violence; living or working on the streets; the impact of armed conflict, including children's use by armed forces and groups; harmful practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and child marriage; lack of access to justice; and unnecessary institutionalization, among others. A protective environment for children boosts development progress, and improves the health, education and well-being of children and their evolving capacities to be parents, citizens and productive members of society. Harmful and abusive practices against children, on the other hand, exacerbate poverty, social exclusion and HIV, and increase the likelihood that successive generations will face similar risks. Child protection is thus an integral part of, and a critical UNICEF contribution to, the achievement of the Millennium Declaration and Development Goals.

5. Child protection concerns are global, and transnational: UNICEF will prioritize child protection in all parts of the world, in situations of both crisis and stability.

6. This strategy aims to reduce children's exposure to harm by accelerating actions that strengthen the protective environment for children in all settings. It sets out these accelerating actions in broad and strategic terms. It supports the child protection results currently identified for UNICEF work, and will help to articulate and underpin such results for a decade. The strategy does not set more, new or different goals,[1] targets or indicators for child protection nor, given the scope of child protection, does it detail programmatic guidance. Through identification of strategic actions for enhanced child protection worldwide, UNICEF hopes to

[1] UNICEF will continue to work towards the key child protection results in the MTSP 2006-2009, which are expressed as follows:

(1) government decisions are influenced by increased awareness of child protection rights and improved data and analysis on child protection;

(2) ensure effective legislative and enforcement systems and improved protection and response capacity to protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse, including exploitative child labour;

(3) better protection of children from the impact of armed conflict and natural disasters (as per the Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies);

(4) children are better served by justice systems that ensure greater protection for them as victims, witnesses and offenders;

(5) children and families identified as vulnerable are reached by key community and government services aimed at reducing their marginalization.

influence the approaches of other actors working in child protection, human rights and development, as well as the private sector, in order that our congruent efforts have more impact. All programmes and actions for the benefit of children's health, education, participation or for addressing the impact of HIV and AIDS should likewise be designed so as to strengthen protection, and must never undermine it.

7. The strategy builds on the extensive international normative framework for child protection, and on relevant recommendations of the Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children. It emphasizes knowledge management and brokering; addressing social exclusion; integrating child protection into all sectors, including health and education, and into emergency work; capacity-building of governments and other partners; and working 'upstream' to obtain sustained results. In this strategy, UNICEF continues to emphasize the importance of partnerships at all levels, including with children themselves.

8. The strategy's five principal sections are grouped by the main approaches for building a protective environment: (a) strengthening national protection systems, and (b) supporting social change; followed by (c) promoting child protection in conflict and natural disasters. The cross-cutting areas are (d) evidence-building and knowledge management, and (e) convening and catalysing agents of change.

9. In each area, the strategy builds on lessons learned at country level, combining approaches that are already part of child protection guidance with others that represent emerging sound practice. The strategic actions identified respond to:

- The global expectation of UNICEF leadership in child protection.
- The need for broad-based partnerships that can leverage gains in child protection.
- The value of building on previous achievements.
- The need to ensure that the multiple aspects of the protective environment are addressed.
- The potential for contributing to measurable advances in child protection over a 10-year period.
- The need to synergize the work of United Nations agencies to achieve child protection results.

## II. Securing the protective environment

10. This section sets out broad and specific strategic actions for strengthening child protection. The Protective Environment Framework (PEF), set out in the 2002 UNICEF Operational Guidance Note, defines eight broad elements that are critical to good protection. These interconnected elements work individually and collectively to strengthen protection and reduce vulnerability. UNICEF work in securing a protective environment, in line with human rights, is oriented towards reducing disparities in access to information, advice and services, whether these disparities are based on geographic or economic obstacles or discrimination based on sex, age, ethnicity or other factors.

**The Protective Environment Framework**

1. *Governmental commitment to fulfilling protection rights*: includes social welfare policies, adequate budgets, public acknowledgement and ratification of international instruments.

2. *Legislation and enforcement*: includes an adequate legislative framework, its consistent implementation, accountability and a lack of impunity.

3. *Attitudes, traditions, customs, behaviour and practices*: includes social norms and traditions that condemn injurious practices and support those that are protective.

4. *Open discussion, including the engagement of media and civil society*: acknowledges silence as a major impediment to securing government commitment, supporting positive practices and ensuring the involvement of children and families.

5. *Children's life skills, knowledge and participation*: includes children, both girls and boys, as actors in their own protection through use of knowledge of their protection rights and ways of avoiding and responding to risks.

6. *Capacity of those in contact with the child*: includes the knowledge, motivation and support needed by families and by community members, teachers, health and social workers and police, in order to protect children.

7. *Basic and Targeted Services*: includes the basic social services, health and education to which children have the right, without discrimination, and also specific services that help to prevent violence and exploitation, and provide care, support and reintegration assistance in situations of violence, abuse and separation.

8. *Monitoring and oversight*: includes effective systems of monitoring such as data collection, and oversight of trends and responses.

11. These elements together describe National Protection Systems and also Social Change. National Protection Systems comprise elements for which the State bears primary responsibility for action: government commitment, legislation, service provision, monitoring, and building human capacity. Open discussion, social norms and the engagement of children themselves require strong support from communities and civil society, and are addressed here as Social Change. In practice, these approaches are heavily intertwined: Legislation contributes to changes in social norms (for example, in attitudes towards child labour), and regulations and training aiming to reduce violence in schools are more effective when backed by social consensus. Categorizing these approaches helps to communicate the key actions UNICEF can take to support protective social norms and the scale-up of protection capacity, legislation and services to benefit children and families.

## II.A. Building national protection systems

12. Child protection systems comprise the set of laws, policies, regulations and services needed across all social sectors — especially social welfare, education,

health, security and justice — to support prevention and response to protection-related risks. These systems are part of social protection, and extend beyond it. At the level of prevention, their aim includes supporting and strengthening families to reduce social exclusion, and to lower the risk of separation, violence and exploitation.

13. Responsibilities are often spread across government agencies, with services delivered by local authorities, non-State providers, and community groups, making coordination between sectors and levels, including routine referral systems, a necessary component of effective child protection systems. Strengthening such systems requires attention to policy reform, institutional capacity development, planning, budgeting, monitoring and information systems. UNICEF is particularly well placed to influence the normative framework pertaining to children, through law reform, policy development and standard-setting initiatives. This upstream approach to child protection draws on the country-level and global experiences and knowledge of UNICEF and others; is consistent with ongoing UNICEF work; and is expected to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of UNICEF support in close collaboration with other United Nations agencies. Building on the understanding of government accountability for protecting children under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments, the approach aims to assist governments in meeting these responsibilities.

14. The priorities of system-strengthening work will vary. Low-resource countries may concentrate on defining a minimum package of child protection services and laws, and the policies and capacities to support them. Post-crisis countries will focus on re-establishment of rule of law and attention to child protection in various sectors as these are re-invigorated. Middle-income countries are likely to reform and improve existing social and legal systems. Common concerns include addressing gender power imbalances, strengthening coordination between sectors and increasing support through social protection and rule of law initiatives. In every setting, making sure that vulnerable, socially excluded or 'invisible' groups are included within the reach of child protection systems will require special emphasis.

***Strategic actions for supporting national child protection systems***

15. **Incorporate child protection into national and decentralized planning processes, including social protection strategies.** This action is in line with the first overarching recommendation of the United Nations Study on Violence against Children. Poverty reduction strategies (PRSs), national development plans, social protection strategies and sector strategic planning in health, education, social welfare and justice provide opportunities to incorporate child protection outcomes and underlying system strengthening. These efforts should aim to secure greater political commitment to social welfare through better understanding of the role that effective protection plays in poverty reduction and national development.

- Identify a minimum package of child protection services and advocate for their inclusion in social protection strategies, in national and sectoral development plans, and in legal reforms.
- Develop and apply an analytic tool for mapping and assessing existing child protection policies, laws and services for adequacy and to identify obstacles and opportunities in implementation, especially in reaching vulnerable or excluded groups.

- Conduct a cost analysis of the provision of child protection services, and advocate for adequate budget allocations.

- Strengthen attention to protection of particularly vulnerable children, including children with disabilities, orphans, ethnic minorities and indigenous groups, and children affected by AIDS.

16. **Ensure that social protection reform contributes to the achievement of child protection outcomes.** The increased emphasis on social protection within international development, including in high HIV prevalence countries, provides an opportunity to emphasize preventive (as well as responsive) child protection services as being central to child-sensitive social protection. These services include parenting education, day care, family support and youth services, social work and alternative care. Recommendation 3 of the Violence Study, which focuses on prevention and on addressing the underlying causes of violence, refers to policies that address poverty and other disparities. UNICEF can also advocate that protection concerns be addressed in the design of cash or in-kind transfers, and use the opportunity to leverage greater support for strengthening of the social welfare sector.

- Support the incorporation of child protection outcomes, and the underlying system-strengthening measures, in all social protection strategies.

- Support increased coverage of social protection, including social welfare services, to reach the most vulnerable children as a priority.

17. **Promote justice for children within the Rule of Law agenda.** Recommendation 9 of the Violence Study stresses the need to improve justice and security sector systems to protect children who come into contact with the law as victims, witnesses and offenders, and to end impunity for crimes against children. There is great scope for broadening our partnerships to harness the work of others around governance, peace and security, and justice sector reform, as well as scaling up the use of our expertise in improving respect for child rights, for example through the legal empowerment and involvement of civil society.

- Promote a common United Nations approach and tools for justice for children, with greater attention given to children in Rule of Law efforts, leveraging the investments of United Nations agencies and other development actors in the justice sector in support of children's issues.

- Improve and disseminate knowledge on issues relating to children in State and non-State justice systems, including diversion and child-sensitive procedures, to inform advocacy, policy positions and programmatic interventions.

- Promote the legal empowerment of children, women and excluded families, and civil society in order to improve their access to justice to redress violation of their rights, helping to break cycles of poverty, violence and exploitation.

18. **Strengthen coordination amongst child protection system actors.** Recommendations 5 and 6 of the Violence Study call for enhancing capacity of those working with children, and strengthening response and reintegration services. Systematic incorporation of child protection concerns within health, education, justice and security sector codes of conduct, professional training, and information and management systems should be areas for future UNICEF work. Coordination between these sectors and the establishment of functioning referral systems are key

to children and families receiving timely, appropriate, accessible and child-friendly services.

- Increase attention to the protection roles and mandates of professionals within the work of UNICEF sectors of education, child survival and HIV. These roles include professional standards, referral mechanisms and coordination at country level, and should be reflected in planning, policy and guidance.
- Strengthen inter-sectoral work among the justice, security and social sectors for support to children in justice processes and reintegrating into society.
- Promote better inter-sectoral and inter-institutional coordination and operational work flows focused on child protection outcomes, at different administrative levels, through innovative methods and UNICEF convening capacity.

19. **Strengthen the social welfare sector.** Strategic approaches to the social welfare sector should focus on policy development, management and oversight capacity, as well as the quality and quantity of human resources, and better monitoring and information systems.

- Support social welfare ministries in assuming an upstream role in the overall national child protection system. This includes support to strengthening capacity in strategic planning and costing of needed services. It also requires advocacy for appropriate budget allocation.
- Support systematic improvements in the quality and use of social work, including its professionalization.
- Promote the development of appropriate regulations and guidelines to improve quality of service provision by non-State actors, as well as government service providers.

20. **Support birth registration.** Birth registration is a human right, and can strengthen children's access to legal protection and basic social services while also improving national data, planning, policy and budgets. It supports the implementation of national legislation on minimum ages, including for child labour, child recruitment and child marriage, and is valuable for tracing efforts when children are separated from their parents. By documenting the relationship between the child, his or her parents and place of birth, registration facilitates the acquisition of nationality by birth or descent, helping to prevent statelessness.

- Work with partners, including international financial institutions (IFIs), governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to strengthen support for birth registration, placing special emphasis on vulnerable and excluded groups.

**UNICEF work, lessons learned and challenges**

21. In child protection work, UNICEF has increasingly moved towards system-strengthening, including policy and institutional reforms and capacity-building of social welfare ministries and local government, often joining with the World Bank, the European Union and bilateral partners. In several regions, UNICEF helped to ensure that child protection services were integrated into national development plans

and poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), and contributed to the reform of juvenile justice systems.

22. Experience at country level shows that a range of entry points can be used to strengthen child protection systems, from alternative approaches to institutional care in CEE/CIS to HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa to commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking in East Asia and Latin America.

23. Strengthening national child protection systems as a whole helps to avoid the duplication that often occurs with purely vertical programmes developed in isolation for specific categories of children. It can yield synergies with development partners, in particular those working to improve social protection or strengthen rule of law. Responsive child protection systems should build on the strengths of issue-specific programming by ensuring that specific forms of vulnerability are addressed, including those related to gender, disability, HIV, and indigenous populations, and be able to measure outcomes for different groups.

24. This approach presents some challenges, particularly regarding the roles of ministries and sectors. Social welfare ministries, commonly the cornerstone for protection, are generally poorly resourced, often lacking the human resources to carry out even statutory responsibilities. The justice and security sectors tend to give scant attention to children. And despite their important role, the health and education sectors often lack child protection policies, codes of conduct and established procedures.

25. Earmarking funds for child protection within national budgets is an emerging phenomenon. The challenge is to obtain recognition of the importance and the costs of child protection. No less than health or education, this sector needs adequate funding, oversight, measurement and monitoring, with the requisite capacity and policies in place.

26. Strengthening child protection systems is not an end in itself. This systems focus is expected to lead to both incremental and dramatic results in the medium term. As family support services, referral mechanisms, alternative care, justice responses and victim support improve at local level, the proportion of children in residential care or detention should decrease, hazardous child labour should decrease or at minimum be addressed more quickly, and violence against children should decline.

## II.B. Supporting social change

27. Better child protection needs social consensus. The Violence Study notes that violence against children is significant in its scale, scope and underreporting, all of which are exacerbated by societal acceptance. Some forms of violence are rooted in discriminatory and unequal societal gender dynamics, and harmful practices can be deeply anchored within societies, making the involvement of all stakeholders in society crucial to bringing about change.

28. In emergencies, disruption of the social fabric undermines protective norms, sharply increasing children's vulnerability to violations of their rights and compounding factors such as displacement and loss of shelter. In communities affected by HIV, discriminatory attitudes and practices aggravate the vulnerability of affected children and their families. Shifts in societal attitudes and behaviours

can be slow, but in some cases gains have been made rapidly: understanding FGM/C as a social convention, for example, provided insights for programming that has led to significant levels of abandonment of the practice in some heavily affected communities. Norms and values also play an important role in the functioning of formal institutions, and civil society and young people can play critical social roles that lead to stronger government accountability.

***Strategic actions for supporting social change:***

29. **Increase knowledge and data collection.** Since 2003, UNICEF has contributed significantly to advancing understanding of the societal dimension of protection programming. However, much remains to be learned about supporting long-term protection-related social and behavioural change strategies, making further research, data collection and analysis essential.

- Expand academic partnerships to focus on specific challenges that concern social norms and practices harmful to children, particularly to girls.
- Prioritize further disaggregation of data pertaining to protection-related social norms and practices.
- Commission or promote external evaluations of innovative initiatives.
- Conduct pilots and support scaling-up of social and behavioural change initiatives in selected urban, peri-urban and rural communities.

30. **Strengthen the protective role of families.** The Violence Study strongly recommends that governments implement culturally appropriate and gender-sensitive parenting and care-giving programmes to support families in providing a violence-free home. Such programmes should include: (a) increasing the understanding by parents and caregivers of the physical, psychological, sexual and cognitive development of infants, children and young people in the context of social and cultural factors; (b) promoting non-violent relationships and non-violent forms of discipline and problem-solving skills; and (c) addressing gender stereotypes.

- Promote parenting education to encourage alternatives to violence for disciplining children.
- Secure greater access to social protection for vulnerable families.
- Strengthen advocacy on the elimination of violence against women and girls in the home, school, community and society.

31. **Strengthen the protective role of communities.** Communities are primarily a source of protection and solidarity for children. Working at community level is an effective way of promoting social change, notably through non-coercive and non-judgmental approaches that emphasize the fulfilment of human rights and empowerment of girls and women.

- Raise community awareness and stimulate open dialogue on the rights of the child and on practices that result in social exclusion or harm to children.
- Encourage outreach by community members to interconnected social groups to gain the consensus needed for positive change.

- Support/evaluate community-based child protection networks that monitor child rights, promote behaviour change, and provide protection services and support to victims of violence and harmful practices.

32. **Promote meaningful child participation and empowerment.** Engaging children in active dialogue, and promoting respect for their views as established in the Convention on the Rights of the Child is critical for children's empowerment as actors in their own protection and that of their peers. This includes child participation in both formal and informal justice processes.

- Strengthen UNICEF work in education, HIV and adolescence to promote children as agents of change according to their evolving capacity, including through life skills education, prevention of stigma and discrimination, and peer communication.
- Partner with and support civil society networks to promote children's participation and empowerment.
- Promote the legal empowerment of girls, boys and families, including through legal awareness and the provision of legal and paralegal services at community level.

33. **Support public education and social dialogue.** Public awareness campaigns can play a role in reducing the prevalence of unfavourable or discriminatory attitudes, beliefs and harmful practices towards children.

- Develop an approach to communication for social change that encourages the abandonment of harmful or unprotective social practices and norms.
- Encourage opportunities for open dialogue on child protection topics, in schools, institutions and community centres.

**UNICEF work, lessons learned and challenges**

34. UNICEF contributed strongly to the participatory process of developing the Violence Study, including organizing nine regional consultations with the participation of governments, United Nations agencies, children, NGOs, media and academic research institutions. The main goal was to break the silence surrounding violence against children. UNICEF found remarkable openness to acknowledging the issue of violence, and readiness by governments to undertake significant new studies and surveys. The challenges of poor data, sensitivity and traditions must nonetheless be acknowledged.

35. It is increasingly accepted that the social dynamics of traditional practices, including harmful social norms and social acceptance of violent behaviour towards children, are most likely to change through collective action. UNICEF and partners are applying this collective model to accelerate social transformation at community level, including the empowerment of women and girls and the promotion of gender equality: In addition to a global coordinated strategy for the abandonment of FGM/C in one generation, UNICEF is examining the application of this approach to other marriage-related practices such as child marriage and dowry. The community-level engagement needed for this approach poses short-term challenges to capacity.

## II.C. Strengthening child protection in armed conflict and natural disasters

36. Conflicts and disasters, more common and often more severe as a result of climate change, create new protection risks and worsen existing ones. The strategic actions are grounded in international humanitarian and human rights law as well as UNICEF emergency experience. Each involves strategy and tool development, training initiatives, new and or strengthened partnerships with national counterparts, international/national organizations, academic and research institutions at global and national levels. All will be implemented through the relevant inter-agency processes, such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) cluster approach and integrated missions, where appropriate.

37. The Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies (CCCs), organized around categories of child protection violations, have encouraged rapid, predictable UNICEF response. To limit duplication of effort, reduce stigmatization of targeted children and adolescents and strengthen responses to other important categories of vulnerable children, UNICEF is working to adapt the systems approach to child protection to emergency and transition contexts, for example through mechanisms at camp level that identify any vulnerable children, provide frontline support and referral to a range of support services (psychosocial support, family tracing, access to education). The emphasis is on preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse rather than on particular categories of children. The present strategy complements the CCCs and strengthens coherence and synergies between emergency and non-emergency child protection programming.

***Strategic actions for strengthening child protection in conflict and natural disasters:***

38. **Build national (and subnational) child protection systems.** In many medium-scale natural disasters or low-intensity armed conflicts, existing child protection systems continue to function to some degree. In rapid-onset emergencies, these systems have often played a crucial role in strong emergency response. Support strategies should take care not to weaken or undermine child protection systems, and where possible to strengthen the capacity of actors with national and subnational child protection responsibility to address the particular protection challenges of emergencies. This may involve supporting social welfare, education, health, law enforcement and justice sectors to address issues such as the identification and provision of support and referral mechanisms for the most vulnerable.

39. Where child protection systems do not exist or have been significantly weakened, external actors should build on positive community mechanisms, working in partnership and strengthening the capacity of local actors, including civil society, in support of child protection rights. Post-emergency situations can offer opportunities to 'build back better', enabling the establishment of a separate juvenile justice system, for example.

- Develop and implement a framework on child protection systems in emergencies and transitions.
- Support the incorporation of child protection emergency preparedness and response planning into national planning mechanisms and help to equip

governments and other actors to identify and respond to new or exacerbated child protection challenges.

- Develop and implement models of community-based child protection systems in emergencies.

40. **Support positive social change.** The Child Protection Strategy recognizes the need to work with communities, and contribute to public education and social dialogue. The participation and empowerment of girls and boys, including adolescents, in reducing the culture of violence is especially important, and mechanisms that address family and community dynamics that affect a range of reintegration and reconstruction contexts will be identified and promoted.

- Strengthen capacity to promote a culture of peace (such as addressing gang membership, familial and communal violence) including identifying good practice on engaging adolescents, families and communities to address violence, and mobilizing youth for positive social change.

- Develop approaches to better address social change in transition as a result of emergencies, including reintegration and the changing roles of family members, especially children and adolescents, as a result of emergencies.

41. **Review, update, expand and implement emergency-specific multi-partner guidance and mechanisms.** Multi-partner guidance facilitates effective field cooperation, particularly in emergencies, and the process of developing shared guidance often yields a better product. Multi-partner guidance developed among United Nations agencies, NGOs and inter-governmental organizations includes the IASC guidelines on gender-based violence, and on HIV and AIDS; the Paris Principles; the United Nations Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration standards; the Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, the CD-ROM on Child Protection in Emergencies, the Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies and other standards in area of landmines, small arms and explosive remnants of war.

- Develop guidance and mechanisms to respond better to child protection concerns during and after natural disasters, and to address emerging issues including justice in emergencies, security sector reform, and children's participation in transitional justice mechanisms.

- Support implementation of IASC and other existing guidance, including new IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings.

- Continue active participation in conflict-related mechanisms such as the monitoring and reporting mechanism under Security Council resolution 1612.

- Contribute actively to inter-agency approaches to protection.

- Identify opportunities for training personnel assigned to peace-building operations on relevant child protection standards.

**UNICEF work, lessons learned and challenges**

42. The CCCs have helped to achieve progress in child protection. UNICEF has also played an active role in developing interagency international standards, tools and mechanisms. These efforts have strengthened responses in family tracing and in

the provision of psychosocial support in natural disasters, as well as for the prevention of recruitment and the reintegration of children associated with armed forces and groups. The CCCs and common standards have improved UNICEF ability to coordinate and contribute to common strategies with our partners. The protection cluster, where UNICEF is the focal point for child protection, encourages increased cooperation among partners that cover a wide range, beyond traditional child protection actors.

43. There is considerable expertise, guidance and extensive networks for particular issues and categories of children in emergencies, and developing and implementing child protection systems in emergencies, while continuing to address specific categories of child protection violations, including in situations of armed conflict, foreign occupation, genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, terrorism or hostage-taking, or where peace-keeping operations are deployed, will require continued efforts, vision and support. In transition situations, the reconstruction of the social sector may not be seen as a priority. The rights of children can, however, provide common ground for dialogue and the prioritization of children in recovery efforts.

44. Collaboration among agencies helps to improve the effectiveness of United Nations child protection activities. To this end, UNICEF contributes to inter-agency working arrangements and supports efforts to integrate child protection into the work of all relevant actors. UNICEF also will continue to promote child protection issues in United Nations integrated missions, including by increasing the ownership and the understanding of child protection concerns among the leadership of such missions.

# III. Priority cross-cutting areas

## III.A. Evidence-building and knowledge management

45. Improving data collection, analysis and use underpins all areas of UNICEF work. This strategy seeks to strengthen the evidence base on child protection, contribute to other areas of knowledge, and ensure that evidence is used effectively to improve policies, laws and their implementation. Stronger national child protection monitoring and country-level diagnosis will form an important part of these efforts. Stepping up its intellectual leadership in this area, UNICEF will take further steps to promote research, building on the solid foundation provided by the work of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre and external knowledge partners, and to consolidate, analyse and disseminate information on child protection, both globally and locally.

***Strategic actions for strengthening evidence-building and knowledge management:***

46. **Strengthen analytical capacities.** UNICEF will strengthen its internal capacities and partnerships, including with academia, to generate, share and utilize high quality knowledge, data and analysis on child protection. Additional support for the capacity of governments, partners and communities to collect, and apply, information tools in child protection is essential.

- Strengthen technical assistance and support to data collection and related capacity through multilateral and bilateral mechanisms.
- Maintain a repository of knowledge, good practices, innovations and lessons learned on child protection and ensure its dissemination.
- Establish communities of practice on child protection issues.

47. **Improve monitoring of child protection issues.** The Violence Study recommends that States "improve data collection and information systems in order to identify vulnerable subgroups, inform policy and track progress towards the goal of preventing violence against children". There is also a need for global monitoring and reporting systems to provide baseline data. National data collection on child protection should become routine, and should include disaggregation by sex, age and other vulnerability factors, encouraging government accountability for protection results. UNICEF will continue to play a leadership role in global child protection indicator development and will emphasize the link between mechanisms for child rights monitoring and sectoral monitoring of child protection issues.

- Convene partners to achieve consensus on child protection indicators and promote regular local, national and global monitoring.
- Establish regional monitoring mechanisms in partnership with regional bodies and research institutions.
- Strengthen child protection modules of the multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS) and make these routine within MICS and other relevant data-collection exercises.
- For emergency contexts, build consensus, support and implement indicators for standardized assessments of child protection in emergencies and for measuring impact of interventions.
- Integrate, to the extent possible, regular and emergency child protection programme monitoring and reporting, and Security Council resolution 1612 monitoring and reporting mechanisms in the relevant contexts.

48. **Strengthen research and diagnosis of child protection challenges.** Strengthening national child protection capacities requires a sound analysis of child protection risks; of existing policies, structures and services that aim to protect children; and the incorporation of the views of children themselves. Issues that may appear identical from one country to another, such as children living and working on the street, can be driven by vastly different circumstances. Child protection situation analyses can inform the work of UNICEF as well as that of national, United Nations and other development partners. Research on emerging issues that affect child protection needs to be identified and disseminated.

- Improve and standardize child protection evaluation to demonstrate impact and help replicate successful approaches.
- Improve child protection situation analysis to include law and policy review; and gender and political environment analyses.
- Identify, and initiate research into, the main evidence gaps, including: cost-effectiveness of various interventions, costing of child protection, assessment of child reintegration programmes, longitudinal research, global security

agenda and child protection, and child protection and the changing physical environment.

- Convene a high level child protection advisory group to identify and support global, regional and national research needs.
- Consolidate, analyse and disseminate information on child protection in emergencies, and promote further research.

**UNICEF work, lessons learned and challenges**

49. Scaled-up efforts need to be based on sound evidence, a solid understanding of local and national factors relevant to protection, including gender, and data that inform decisions and support tracking of progress. In child protection, special challenges attach to each of these: data are hard to gather on issues that are illegal, clandestine or sensitive; local social factors are important determinants of protection; and evaluation remains relatively sparse and of variable quality.

50. Since 2002, UNICEF has worked with many partners to introduce standardized common child protection indicators. Partners working on Child Protection Indicator Development and Data Collection include the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Statistics Division, the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, and members of the Inter-agency Coordination Panel on Juvenile Justice.

51. While the identification of child protection indicators and the collection of data have improved significantly since 2002, data collection has proceeded more slowly. Global data are collected by UNICEF on issues measurable through household surveys, including birth registration, child labour, child marriage, FGM/C, child disability and child discipline. Indicators have been agreed, but data are not yet universally available on juvenile justice or formal care, which require national administrative information systems. Global data are not available on violence in schools, small arms and light weapons, and other issues that are exceptionally sensitive or of a criminal nature, such as trafficking and sexual abuse. The DevInfo database management system is being expanded to include child protection data. EPI-Info is being used in several affected countries for surveillance of landmine-related injuries and deaths.

52. Several governments have adopted mandatory data collection procedures, and countries are adding key child protection indicators in national development plans. Data often remain insufficiently disaggregated by some variables, such as disability, leaving policymakers without the information needed to identify and plan appropriate policies and services for those who are most at risk, excluded or underserved.

53. More systematic evaluation of child protection initiatives will improve learning within and beyond UNICEF. Evidence of programme impact is increasingly being captured across different sectors, as the Violence Study has illustrated. UNICEF should do more to seek out and disseminate such evidence and to draw attention to the child protection research agenda.

## III.B. Convening and catalysing agents of change

54. UNICEF is expected to take a leadership role on child protection issues. This gives UNICEF a high degree of responsibility to act as an advocate, convener and partner, encouraging and not overshadowing the contributions of others.

55. Child protection interventions can be accelerated and maximized by leveraging the full potential of partnerships with United Nations agencies, IFIs, national Governments, civil society, the private sector and faith-based communities. UNICEF also has a useful catalytic function in brokering the potential assistance and engagement of partners, in both advocacy and support and action on the ground. It is important to emphasize that as UNICEF moves away from issue-based programming, there is still need to harness the energy and advocacy potential of issue-based partnerships. The catalysing and convening action of UNICEF will be enhanced by building and sharing a repository of knowledge, data and analysis on protection issues. New and creative forms of partnership will be explored.

***Strategic actions to convene and catalyse change agents:***

56. **Promote the development and implementation of common, multi-partner guidance for programmes and advocacy.** UNICEF will pursue existing partnerships and networks to develop common positions and programming approaches, leveraging the programming of partners for better child protection delivery.

- Use current partnership frameworks and convene new ones to develop and support the implementation of common approaches to child protection programming.
- Build on major public and government commitments to specific groups of affected children — such as children orphaned or affected by AIDS, trafficked children or children with disabilities — while encouraging a broader approach to programming.
- Convene and provide leadership around key emergency child protection issues, including the IASC child protection subcluster, psychosocial support, separated children, justice for children, children unlawfully recruited or used in armed conflict, and mine risk education.

57. **Encourage private sector collaboration.** The private sector often plays a critical role in child protection. Building on the success of individual partnerships, a broader dialogue with the private sector will be pursued. Efforts will go towards encouraging corporate social responsibility for child protection goals in both developing and developed countries, and in emergencies.

- Expand dialogue with corporate partners, emphasizing the promotion of good practices, and liaise with other expert partners to identify appropriate actions at global, regional and country levels.

58. **Seek upstream benefits for child protection through partnerships.** Partnerships with bilateral and multilateral organizations, including IFIs, can generate greater investment in sectors with child protection responsibility. UNICEF will work with partners to promote greater strategic support to government agencies responsible for protection, such as social welfare, and to ensure that the importance

of child protection is recognized and systematically addressed in economic development initiatives. As well, UNICEF will support integration of emergency response and preparedness strategies for child protection into national and peace-support operations.

- Review with donors and agency partners the inclusion of child protection within justice, governance, social protection and other categories of support.
- Support the incorporation of child protection priorities in humanitarian reform and peace-building and peace-support operations, including at early stages of mandate development.
- Expand use of cost-benefit analysis to support strategic choices, including with IFIs and the private sector around economic development issues.
- Participate in global child protection learning networks related to both emergency and development contexts.
- Include national emergency preparedness and response capacity in national planning processes — especially in disaster-prone countries, for example, in PRSPs, United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, Common Country Assessments and Country Assistance Frameworks.
- Build engagement with and increase the capacity of peace-keeping troop contributing countries in order that their troops will contribute to a protective environment for children when deployed.

59. **Strengthen advocacy.** UNICEF will promote child protection through advocacy in both developed and developing countries through research and evidence, existing partnerships and new opportunities. Linking programming and advocacy initiatives, or 'upstream' and 'downstream' efforts, can be particularly effective. UNICEF ties with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, and the Offices of the High Commissioners for Human Rights and for Refugees will remain important. Engagement with civil society and young people in these efforts will be a priority.

- Form high-level child protection expert groups to strengthen identification of critical and emerging issues and responses (these could include gang violence, cyberspace depictions of child abuse, and children and migration).
- Develop strategies to support the incorporation of child protection targets on development, rule of law and human rights agendas.
- Work with Parliamentarians to encourage political and legislative attention to child protection concerns.
- Identify and use opportunities to speak out on specific violations of children's protection rights, especially when doing so can help make an immediate difference, or contribute to positive changes in attitudes, practices or policies in the medium or long term.
- Support advocacy on violence against children through cooperation with and support to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the inter-agency group on Violence against Children, and

systematic follow-up of recommendations in the Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children.

- In industrialized countries, build on global initiatives, and the work of National Committees for UNICEF, to advocate for greater attention to child protection.

- Expand teaching initiatives and academic partnerships on child protection.

**UNICEF work, lessons learned and challenges**

60. The extensive child protection partnerships *at global level* are illustrated in the Strategy Reference Document (the companion background document to the Strategy). Many of these partnerships are also active and effective at regional and national levels, and UNICEF is engaged in thousands of additional partnerships as part of programming and advocacy at country level. More progress can be made in partnerships and advocacy, especially taking into consideration the leadership role of UNICEF in child protection, the opportunities presented by the ongoing process of United Nations coherence, the aid effectiveness agenda, and collaboration with both IFIs and private sector bodies.

61. Partnership-building around justice for children is an example of making good use of the environment created by United Nations coherence initiatives. The Secretary-General's Rule of Law Reports and related decisions identify UNICEF as lead agency for juvenile justice, enabling the organization to convene a process with other agencies to develop a United Nations-wide approach to justice for children. This goes beyond 'children in conflict with the law' to look more broadly at the treatment of children within the law enforcement and justice sectors. This approach should ultimately enhance attention paid to children across all United Nations-supported rule of law work and on the broader agendas of governance, security and justice sector reform, areas in which justice for children can easily be integrated.

62. Understanding Children's Work (UCW) is a partnership among UNICEF, the World Bank and ILO/International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour. The UCW joint research programme has produced reports on the linkages among education, health and child labour and has begun to engage in advocacy. Nevertheless, progress is yet to be made in introducing child labour into priority areas, such as the economic and social development work of the World Bank or the social protection aims of the ILO.

63. UNICEF has a long history of engagement with the private sector for child protection, including on broad-based campaigns and Codes of Conduct. There are promising examples of reducing and eliminating the use of children in manufacturing, agriculture and extractive industries, children's sexual exploitation in connection with travel and tourism, and in the sale of child abuse images. In many cases, companies have taken initiatives to prevent the exploitation of children in their own sectors, and have been influential in the formulation of public policy as lobbyists, advocates and advertisers.

64. Advocacy around child protection issues in industrialized countries has been increasingly taken up by National Committees for UNICEF — nearly always through partnership with other national civil society organizations — on issues ranging from child trafficking (United Kingdom Committee) to FGM/C (Switzerland Committee).

65. The role of young people in protection advocacy is becoming more evident and more visible. Adolescents who face acute protection challenges have been highly effective advocates on violence against children and the impact of armed conflict, and in breaking the silence on subjects considered sensitive.

## IV. Leveraging results through the strategic use of resources

66. UNICEF will intensify its efforts to increase the knowledge and awareness of all staff members regarding child protection; to further strengthen the skills of child protection staff; and to deploy staff for greatest impact. Work with partners will also be strengthened to leverage the greatest impact from financial resources. UNICEF will promote codes of conduct or ethical standards for human resources and business practices that reflect child protection principles.

67. **Staffing.** UNICEF child protection costs reflect little direct implementation/service delivery, and almost no supplies, working mainly through capacity development, technical support, policy advocacy, liaison and alliance-building. This labour-intensive and interactive work requires highly qualified staff. In the absence of sufficient child protection staff with the required skills, child protection objectives cannot be met.

68. Child protection staff traditionally have backgrounds in law, social work and advocacy, and also need sound political judgment and analytical skills. Strengths in social policy, behavioural sciences and social change, organizational development, and networking and coordination are increasingly important. Country Representatives and staff in other sectors also require the skills to build child protection into the full range of UNICEF programming and advocacy.

69. In strengthening staffing at country, regional and headquarters levels, staff time for effectively maintaining the many child protection partnerships should be taken into account.

***Strategic Action***

- Undertake strategic human resources planning to integrate these capacities into recruitment and training.
- Design a corporate learning strategy for non-protection staff.

70. **Funding.** Support for longer-term strategies in support of systems-strengthening and social change remains a challenge. Funding for child protection in countries giving it low priority has also been a challenge. Strategies should be developed to strengthen support for child protection initiatives.

***Strategic Action***

- Undertake review of how best to leverage additional resources for child protection through governments, the private sector, United Nations and IFI partners, and other UNICEF priority areas.
- Convene annual meetings of the Child Protection Donor Group.

71. **Applying child protection principles to practice.** Child protection principles must also be reflected in UNICEF human resources and business practices, and

extended to the wider United Nations family. In recent years, UNICEF committed to a "zero tolerance" policy towards the sexual abuse and exploitation of children, or any other form of child abuse or exploitation by its staff or those directly affiliated with the organization. In addition, the Secretary-General's bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse established a code of conduct for all United Nations staff.

***Strategic Action***

- Reflect the UNICEF zero tolerance policy towards sexual exploitation and abuse of children through the inclusion of the policy's provisions in the contracts of UNICEF staff, UNICEF partners and UNICEF vendors.
- Review human resource and business practices with respect to strengthening protection against other forms of child exploitation and abuse.

# V. Tracking progress

72. Indicators of child protection outcomes are tracked within the MTSP. In addition to this results-monitoring, UNICEF is working to broaden tracking to include critical indicators not currently in wide use, and measurements of the coherence of government efforts to improve child protection. UNICEF proposes the following measures and milestones for 2010:

- A biannual review of child protection progress, accompanied by a dedicated report on the State of Child Protection, beginning with a leadership forum/high level review of child protection progress.
- A review of child protection policies and procedures in selected national health and education systems.
- The tracking of official development assistance related to child protection.
- The establishment of global baselines in juvenile justice and alternative care.
- Review of the evaluability of programme outcomes in UNICEF-supported child protection programmes.

# VI. Conclusion

73. Safety and support should be the norm for all children everywhere. Governments have made extensive commitments to prevent children from being exploited and abused, and to respond effectively when they are. Even as countries post impressive gains in child survival and in education, however, full child protection remains elusive, in developed and developing countries alike.

74. Over the past decade, child protection has risen higher on the UNICEF agenda and that of the international community. There is broad recognition of the fact that children in both developed and developing countries face protection risks, and of the cross-border nature of many protection issues. There is also greater recognition of the linkages between improved child protection and sustainable achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. As this strategy helps illustrate, there are abundant opportunities to strengthen attention to child protection in national development

plans, within rule of law and other sector-strengthening efforts, to make social protection a reality, and to improve humanitarian response. The ability of UNICEF to use these opportunities will depend on building the evidence base, scrutinizing and applying lessons learned by all child protection and development actors, taking leadership on knowledge management and strengthening and making effective use of partnerships.

## VII. Draft decision

75. It is recommended that the Executive Board adopt the following draft decision:

*The Executive Board*

*Endorses* the "UNICEF Child Protection Strategy" (E/ICEF/2008/5/Rev.1) as the UNICEF strategy document for programmes and actions in support of Child Protection.